

Level of Service Descriptions

Highway traffic congestion is expressed in terms of Level of Service (LOS) as defined by the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM). LOS is a letter code ranging from “A” for excellent conditions to “F” for failure conditions. The conditions defining the LOS for roadways are summarized as follows:

LOS A

- Free-flow (FF) operation

LOS B

- Reasonably free-flow
- Ability to maneuver is only slightly restricted
- Effects of minor incidents still easily absorbed

LOS C

- Speeds at or near FF
- Freedom to maneuver is noticeably restricted
- Queues may form

LOS D

- Speeds decline slightly with increasing flows
- Density increases more quickly
- Freedom to maneuver is more noticeable limited
- Minor incidents create queuing

LOS E

- Operation near or at capacity
- No usable gaps in the traffic stream
- Operations extremely volatile
- Any disruption causes queuing

LOS F

- Breakdown in flow
- Queues form behind breakdown points
- Demand is greater than capacity

